DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 450 852 JC 010 236

TITLE	Student Preferences for Alternative Course Delivery Options. Report #116.
INSTITUTION	Philadelphia Community Coll., PA.
PUB DATE	2000-11-00
NOTE	7p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Community Colleges; *Distance Education; Educational Improvement; Graduate Surveys; Nontraditional Education; *Student Attitudes; *Teaching Methods; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	*Community College of Philadelphia PA

ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the results of a graduate survey on their preferences for alternative methods of course delivery, preferences for weekly class schedules, and assessments of distance learning courses. The 1999 Community College of Philadelphia graduates were presented with several possible scheduling options which they were asked to designate as appealing or otherwise. Accelerated degree programs, in which students would have an opportunity to earn a degree in a shortened period of time, appealed to more than half (55.3%) of 1999 graduates. A Weekend College experience also appealed to a large portion of survey respondents (36.6%). The survey also asked graduates to indicate if several alternative weekly class schedules would have appealed to them as students of the College. Large percentages of graduates were in favor of classes that necessitated fewer trips to the campus (56%) and greater opportunities to take courses across campus locations (49.7%). Few 1999 graduates had the opportunity to take distance learning courses while working on their degree. On balance, students were less positive in their assessment of distance learning courses than their other courses. Bearing in mind that for these respondents distance learning meant television courses, these findings are not surprising. (JA)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 450 852

Student Preferences for Alternative Course Delivery Options
Report #116
November 2000

Community College of Philadelphia
Institutional Research, M2-35
1700 Spring Garden Street
Philadelphia, PA 19130

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J Grossett

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

FL010236

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Student Preferences for Alternative Course Delivery Options

November 2000

Strategic Planning Principle 3 addresses the need for the College to anticipate the changing context for educational services and to increase the range of options for the delivery of programs and services. This planning principle led to the designation of a strategic objective to develop and expand the use of alternative course-delivery strategies. In order to inform institutional discussions focused on this planning issue, the questionnaire that was used to survey 1999 Community College of Philadelphia graduates included several questions related to preferences for alternative methods of course delivery, preferences for weekly class schedules, and assessments of distance learning courses.

Graduates were presented with several possible scheduling options which they were asked to designate as appealing or otherwise. Table 1 contains these options in order of respondent preference.

Table 1
Appeal of Scheduling Options
1999 Graduates

Scheduling Option	% of Respondents
Accelerated degree programs	55.3
Weekend College	36.6
Classes between fall and spring semesters	24.3
Multiple summer sessions	23.6
10 week courses beginning later in semester	18.1
More frequent sessions - quarters vs. semesters	15.9

Accelerated degree programs, in which students would have an opportunity to earn a degree in a shortened period of time, appealed to more than half (55.3%) of 1999 graduates. A Weekend College experience also appealed to a large portion of survey

respondents (36.6%). Nearly one-quarter of graduates liked the idea of taking classes during the intercession or multiple summer sessions, similar to those offered at the College during Summer 2000.

The survey also asked graduates to indicate if several alternative weekly class schedules would have appealed to them as students of the College. The following table contains the percentages of graduates who indicated a preference for each of the scheduling options. Large percentages of graduates were in favor of classes that necessitated fewer trips to the campus (56%) and greater opportunities to take courses across campus locations (49.7%). Saturday and early morning classes were also appealing options to 1999 graduates.

Table 2
Appeal of Weekly Class Scheduling Options
1999 Graduates

Scheduling Option	% of Respondents
Classes that meet once a week for 3 hours	56.0
Greater variety of courses at regional centers	49.7
More Saturday courses	39.6
More classes that start at 7 am	22.2
More distance learning courses	20.9
Sunday classes	19.9

Few 1999 graduates had the opportunity to take distance learning courses while working on their degree. Only 16.6% indicated they took this type of a course and, in the context of past college offerings, it is probable that the course was a television course. Students who had a distance learning experience were asked two follow up questions: 1) In general, how did these courses compare to other courses you took at the College? and 2) Academically, did you find these courses to be more difficult, less

difficult, or about the same as other courses? The responses to these items appear in Tables 3 and 4, respectively.

On balance, students were less positive in their assessment of distance learning courses than their other courses. Bearing in mind that for these respondents distance learning meant television courses, these findings are not surprising. Both historical grade distribution information and the observations of instructors in television courses have noted the higher than normal course withdrawal behavior associated with students taking television courses.

Table 3
Comparison of Distance Learning Courses to Other Courses
1999 Graduates

	% of Respondents
Better than other courses	11.5
About the same as other courses	61.5
Worse than other courses	26.9

Nearly 40% of graduates found their distance learning course(s) more difficult than other courses they had taken at the College while only 9.8% found them less so (Table 4). For half of the graduates, there was no difference in their perceptions of the academic demands across course types.

Table 4
Comparison of Difficulty of Distance Learning Courses to Other Courses
1999 Graduates

	% of Respondents
More difficult than other courses	39.2
About the same as other courses	51.0
Less difficult than other courses	9.8

Graduates reported they would find Internet courses slightly more appealing than television courses (Table 5). Interactive video courses were appealing to a lesser extent. It is interesting to note that 37% of graduates found none of these course delivery options appealing. Table 6 contains the same information as Table 5 disaggregated by graduates

Table 5
Preferences for Distance Learning Course Delivery Options
1999 Graduates

	% of Graduates
Internet courses	42.7
Television courses	38.4
Interactive video courses	13.2
None of the above	37.0

who did (16.6%) or did not (83.4%) take a distance learning course at the College while completing their course requirements for graduation. The biggest difference across the two groups was related to interest in taking courses delivered through any of the distance learning delivery options listed on the questionnaire. While 11.8% of the graduates who had done so reported a disinterest in these types of courses, 42.5% of those who had not were disinterested in distance learning. There was also a sizeable difference across groups related to television courses.

Table 6
Preferences for Distance Learning Course Delivery Options
1999 Graduates

	Took a DL Course %	Did not Take a DL Course %
Internet courses	47.1	41.6
Television courses	56.9	35.0
Interactive video courses	17.6	12.4
None of the above	11.8	42.5

The survey results validate the objective associated with Strategic Planning Principle 3 to develop and expand the use of alternative course-delivery strategies. Graduates have indicated a desire for a greater range of course-delivery options ranging from scheduling issues and distance learning opportunities. In order to meet this challenge, the College will need to address several other objectives that have been laid out in the Strategic Plan. These include: developing a fuller understanding of who can benefit from alternative delivery courses and using this information proactively in advising and counseling; assessing and redesigning student services in the context of changing modes of instructional delivery; developing a comprehensive enrollment management plan to facilitate achievement of enrollment goals in alternative delivery courses; and modifying current administrative procedures for program and course delivery systems to support more timely delivery of new programs and services.